

CM Omar presides over curtain raiser for J&K International Film Festival

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JULY 24

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today presided over the curtain raiser for the Ist International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir (IFFJK) at the Royal Springs Golf Course here, describing the forthcoming festival as a landmark initiative to revive Jammu and Kashmir's historic association with cinema and establish J&K as a preferred destination for filmmaking.

The launch event was attended by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, eminent filmmaker and Padma Shri awardee Muzaffar Ali, renowned filmmaker and writer Imtiaz Ali, filmmaker Sajid Ali, Director Information Shreya Singhal, Secretary in Information Department, Munir ul Islam, Secretary Royal Springs Golf Course Haris Ahmad Handoo, Joint Director Information Shah Nawaz Bukhari, senior government officers and members of the film fraternity.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said the festival marks the beginning of a renewed partnership between Jammu and Kashmir and the film industry, recalling a time when Kashmir was an integral part of Indian cinema.

"There was a time when filmmaking in Bollywood and Kashmir was synonymous. No film was considered complete unless it had at least one sequence shot in the Valley. Even if an entire film was not shot here, at least one memorable song was," he said.

Highlighting the vision behind IFFJK, Omar Abdullah said the festival seeks to rebuild that historic bond while creating new opportunities for local talent, strengthening the creative economy and showcasing Jammu and Kashmir to audiences across the world. "Our loss has been many other countries' gain. Had Kashmir remained consistently open for filmmaking, many productions that went else-



where would have continued to come here. Today, we stand at the cusp of rebuilding that relationship," he said.

The Chief Minister stressed that the Government is working to create a filmmaker-friendly ecosystem by simplifying procedures, reducing production costs and developing a skilled local workforce to support film production.

"We need to make it easier for filmmakers to come here, cheaper for them to shoot here, and ensure that our young people are equipped with the skills required to support filmmaking activities," he said, adding that the necessary groundwork has already begun.

Referring to filmmaker Muzaffar Ali's long-awaited project Zooni, Omar Abdullah expressed happiness that the unfinished work had now been completed by Muzaffar Ali's son. Originally conceived in the late 1980s with Vinod Khanna and Dimple Kapadia in lead roles, he said the film would present Kashmir in a way not seen over the past four decades.

"If what has been completed carries even a fraction of the vision with which it was originally conceived, it will showcase Kashmir in a way it has not been presented for decades. Screening it at a Film Festival in Kashmir would elevate the festival to an entirely different level," he said.

Expressing confidence that IFFJK would become a permanent fixture on the

global film calendar, the Chief Minister said the Government envisions it evolving into an internationally recognised film festival with parallel screening in Jammu and Gulmarg.

"This is the first, but certainly not the last. Great film festivals acquire an identity and brand of their own. We hope that, in the years ahead, the International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir will stand alongside the finest festivals in the country and eventually earn recognition among the best in the world," he said.

The Chief Minister also welcomed the decision to keep Srinagar Airport operational during the festival period, saying it had removed a major logistical concern and would ensure smooth participation by filmmakers, artists and guests from across the country and abroad.

He thanked Muzaffar Ali, Imtiaz Ali and Sajid Ali for supporting the initiative and for their longstanding association with Jammu and Kashmir.

"Your presence here is encouraging not merely because of your words but because your actions over the years have demonstrated your deep association with Jammu and Kashmir. Your support gives this initiative tremendous strength, and we look forward to welcoming you all back for the festival in September," he said.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo said that this curtain raiser ceremony is a historic occasion which re-

minds the great partnership of J&K with Bollywood. He added that this platform is a great occasion to establish the bond with Bollywood.

The Chief Secretary also said that J&K has a goldmine of talent and potential and we need to give platform like this to our budding filmmakers to showcase their talent.

Padma Shri awardee and noted film maker, Muzaffar Ali, while speaking on the occasion highlighted that Kashmir has special place in the Bollywood from the very beginning. He also remembered his association with the Kashmir while shooting for various remarkable films here.

In his address, renowned filmmaker and writer Imtiaz Ali said that Kashmiri youth are brightest as far as talent is concerned. He also remembered his association with Kashmir while shooting for various Bollywood blockbusters in the valley.

Earlier, in her welcome address, Director Information, Shreya Singhal said that this curtain raiser ceremony will set the centre stage for homecoming of cinema to Jammu and Kashmir.

The Director Information highlighted that this film festival aims to establish J&K as a prime film shooting destination in the country. She added that till date around 400 entries from over 25 countries in different formats have been received for screening during the festival and the entry for film submissions will close on 30th July, 2026.

District-level capacity building workshop on PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan held at Ramban

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A district-level capacity building workshop on the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) was organised today at the Conference Hall, Ramban, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan.

Officers and representatives of various line departments attended the workshop, besides General Manager District Industries Centre Ramban Ravinder Kumar along with his staff.

Addressing the participants, Chief Planning Officer Ramban Dr Shakeeb Ahmed Rather said the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan fosters integrated infrastructure planning, data-driven governance and coordinated decision-making. Effective utilisation of the GIS-enabled PM Gati Shakti Portal would facilitate better project



planning, reduce implementation delays and ensure optimal use of public resources.

The concerned departments were directed to obtain access to the PM Gati Shakti Portal and use the platform for the planning, monitoring and implementation of developmental projects and to nominate appropriate officers as Maker, Checker and Approver for the timely, accurate and authenticated uploading of departmental data.

The technical team of the

Industries & Commerce Department, the nodal department for implementation of PM Gati Shakti in Jammu and Kashmir, conducted training sessions and presentations on various components of the portal. The sessions covered an overview of the National Master Plan, portal access procedures, live demonstrations of portal functionalities, the Data Upload Management System (DUMS), analytical tools and the overall data management framework.

Technical Experts (PM

Gati Shakti, J&K) Santosh Kumar Rai and Naseer Mir conducted the training, providing hands-on guidance to the participants and addressing their queries on the use of the portal.

Participants interacted with the resource persons and discussed departmental requirements, operational challenges and measures for strengthening the implementation of the PM Gati Shakti initiative at the district level.

The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks.

DAJ reviews functioning of testing laboratories; calls for transparency and quality standards

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Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta today reviewed the functioning and quality control mechanisms of the Soil Testing Laboratory (STL), Pesticide Testing Laboratory (PTL) and Fertilizer Quality Control Laboratory (FQCL) working under the Agriculture Chemist, Directorate of Agriculture, at Krishi Bhawan, Talab Tillo, Jammu.

He inspected all three laboratories, examining testing procedures, analytical facilities, record maintenance, laboratory hygiene, equipment functionality, compliance with quality control protocols and workflow and discussed operational challenges with the laboratory personnel.

The Director instructed the officers concerned to achieve the assigned testing targets within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining technical effi-



ciency, scientific accuracy and transparency. Laboratory reports, he said, must be generated strictly as per the prescribed quality protocols to ensure the credibility of analytical results.

He directed the Analysts to bring additional pesticide molecules under the scope of analysis at the Pesticide Testing Laboratory so that a wider range of formulations can be monitored and called for strengthening the Mini Soil Testing Laboratories established under HADP as well

as facilities for testing organic fertilisers, bio-fertilisers and pesticide residues. Robust testing infrastructure, he said, would ensure the quality and safety of agricultural inputs and support sustainable farming practices.

Agriculture Chemist Roshan Lal informed the Director that all three laboratories have been accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and are continuously upgrad-

ing their infrastructure, analytical capabilities and quality assurance practices to provide accurate and timely testing services to the farming community.

The Director was accompanied by Agriculture Chemist Roshan Lal, SMS-RL Krishan Kant, Assistant Soil Chemist (STL) Chander Shekhar, Assistant Agriculture Chemist (PTL) Ravinder Gupta, Assistant Biochemist (FQCL) Deepak Singh, Analysts, besides other officers and staff of the department.

DC Ramban assesses restoration of NH; reviews public safety measures

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Amid continuous heavy rainfall over the past three days, Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today conducted an on-the-spot inspection from Nashri to Ramsoo to assess the impact of the inclement weather and review the progress of restoration works being carried out by various executing agencies, particularly along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44).

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police Arun Gupta, along with senior officers of the civil and police administration.

He visited vulnerable stretches of the National Highway where restoration and debris clearance operations are being carried out by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). He reviewed the deployment of men and machinery and directed the executing agencies to expedite clearance works while ensuring the safety of the personnel engaged in restoration activities.

The DC directed all departments concerned to



maintain close coordination and ensure that vehicular movement on the National Highway resumes only after the Traffic Department issues the necessary clearance and travel advisory. He appealed to commuters to strictly follow the advisories issued by the Police and Traffic authorities through official communication channels and to avoid non-essential travel until the weather improves and the highway is declared safe for traffic.

Reviewing the situation arising from the continuous rainfall and the rising water level in the Chenab river, local nallahs and

streams, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the departments concerned to intensify public awareness campaigns and prevent people from venturing near water bodies. He urged citizens to stay away from rivers, nallahs and other vulnerable locations to avoid any untoward incident.

Taking stock of the restoration of internal roads and essential public services, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Public Works Department (PWD), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

to intensify restoration works by deploying adequate manpower and machinery for the early reopening of all blocked roads and the officers of Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCL), Jal Shakti Department and other line departments to restore electricity supply, drinking water facilities and other essential services on priority.

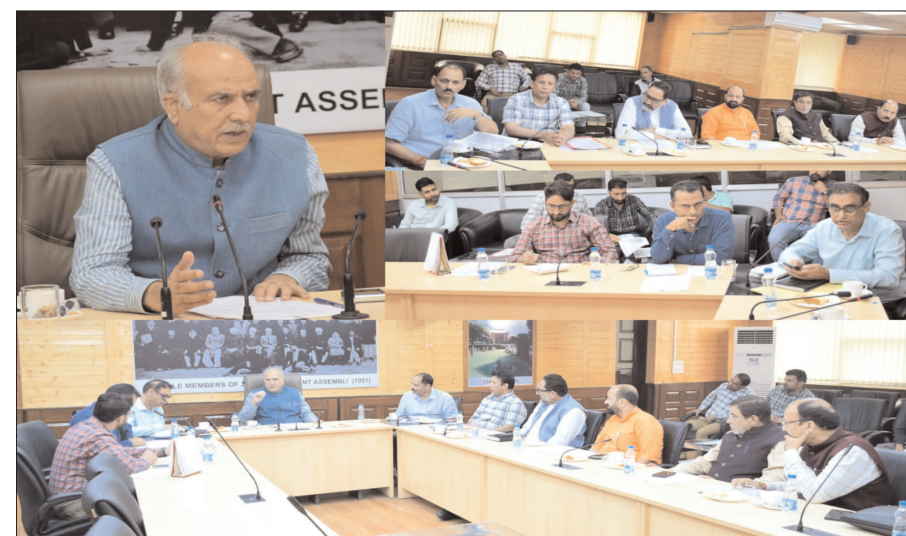
Restoring road connectivity to the affected areas, he said, remains a priority to minimise public inconvenience and ensure the movement of essential services.

Masoodi chairs Committee on Privileges meeting, examines Breach of Privilege case

SRINAGAR, JULY 24: MLA, Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi today chaired a meeting of Committee on Privileges here at Legislative Assembly Complex to discuss and examine Breach of Privilege case against Waheer Rehman Para, MLA in accordance with the established parliamentary practices and procedures governing the privileges of the House.

The meeting was attended by Legislators Showkat Hussain Ganie, Khurshid Ahmad, Zafar Ali Khatana, Vijay Kumar, Rajeev Kumar and Darshan Kumar.

The Committee took note of a written communication dated 23-07-2026 received from Waheed ur Rehman Para wherein he has conveyed his inability to appear before the Committee as he is required to appear before the NIA Court, Jammu in connection with a matter already fixed for hearing. Citing this unavoidable circumstance, he has humbly requested the Committee to adjourn his appearance and grant him a fresh date at the convenience of the



Committee. He further assured the Committee of his fullest respect, cooperation and readiness to appear on any other date as may be fixed by the Committee.

The Committee took note of the request and observed that the reason cited by the MLA was genuine and unavoidable. Accordingly the Chairman accepted the plea for adjournment and allowed the member to appear before it on 7th August 2026 which shall be notified in due course.

During the meeting, the Committee reiterated the constitutional importance

of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Members of the Legislative Assembly. These privileges are fundamental to enable the Members to discharge their legislative duties without fear or hindrance. They inter-alia included Freedom of Speech in the House and its Committees as provided under Article 194 of the Constitution of India.

Secretary Legislative Assembly Manoj Kumar Pandita apprised the committee about the Privileges of Members of the Legislative Assembly and their special

rights and immunities that enable Legislators to perform their legislative duties independently and effectively. The ultimate source of these privileges is Constitution of India: Article 194 of the Constitution of India provides for the powers, privileges and immunities of State Legislatures and of the Members and Committees.

The Committee further observed that the House and its Committees are vested with specific powers to ensure accountability and effective functioning of the Legislature.